

Message Text

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CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L WELLINGTON 0944

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: MARR, MPOL, AS, NZ, SN, UK, US

SUBJECT: USN ACCESS TO NAVAL STORES BASIN AND FUEL DEPOT

REF: (A) SINGAPORE 1374

(B) SINGAPORE 1406

1. IN BRIEFING TO EMBOFF APRIL 9, BRIAN LYNCH (HEAD, MFA ASIAN DIVISION) SAID USN ACCESS QUESTION WAS ONLY marginally touched upon during discussions between SINGAPORE PM LEE KUAN YEW AND NEW ZEALAND PRIME MINISTER ROWLING. LYNCH, WHO SAT IN ON METTING, SAID TOPIC WAS BROACHED BY ROWLING. LEE SAID USG HAD "NOT MOOTED THE SUBJECT" TO HIM AND IT WAS NOT CLEAR TO HIM AS TO JUST WHAT US PROPOSALS OR PROBLEMS WERE. LEE INDICATED, HOWEVER, THAT HE FOUND USN PRESENCE A STABILIZING FACTOR AND THAT GOS AND OTHER COUNTRIES IN AREA SHOULD DO NOTHING TO ANTAGONIZE USG.

2. AT APRIL 7 PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING MEETING WITH LEE, PRIME MINISTER ROWLING WAS ASKED FOUR QUESTIONS CONCERNING STORES BASIN AND FUEL DEPOT. COMPLETE TEXT OF QUESTIONS
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AND ANSWERS FOLLOWS: BEGIN QUOTE

Q. WHAT ABOUT AMERICAN FEELERS REGARDING THE NAVAL BASE IN SINGAPORE?

PRIME MINISTER: THE SITUATION AT THE MOMENT IS, OF COURSE, THE NAVAL BASE IN SINGAPORE WAS BUILT AND MANNED BY THE BRITISH UNDER THE FIVE POWER TREATY ARRANGEMENT AND THE BRITISH WITHDRAWAL WILL TO ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES LEAVE IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE SOME VACUUM THERE. THE, I THINK THE FAIREST WAY OF PUTTING IT REALLY IS THAT IT IS OBVIOUS THAT MR. LEE WOULD NOT BE UNSYMPATHETIC TO ANY REASONABLE REQUIREMENTS THE AMERICANS MIGHT HAVE ALONG WITH ANY REASONABLE REQUIREMENTS ANY OTHER NATION MIGHT HAVE WITH REGARD TO BERTHAGE IN THAT AREA. BUT IT WILL ESSENTIALLY BE A MATTER BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND SINGAPORE NOT BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND NEW ZEALAND ONTO SINGAPORE.

Q. DID MR. LEE SOUND YOU OUT OR DID YOU PROFFER ANY ADVICE OR INFORMATION?

PRIME MINISTER: I WOULDN'T PRESUME TO ADVISE MR. LEE WHAT HE WOULD DO WITH A NAVAL BASE IN HIS OWN COUNTRY.

Q. JUST IN YOUR OWN EXCHANGES OF INFORMATION WITH THE AMERICANS YOURSELF, I JUST WONDERED WHETHER YOU WERE ABLE TO JUST PROFFER.....?

PRIME MINISTER: THERE IS NOTHING VERY CONCLUSIVE. I DON'T THINK ANY OF US KNOW MUCH MORE THAN WE HAVE SEEN IN THE NEWSPAPER ON THIS TO BE PERFECTLY HONEST. THAT WAS ONE THING THAT DID EMERGE AND THE CONSEQUENCE OF THAT IS REALLY ESSENTIALLY IT WILL BE A MATTER THAT IF THE AMERICANS HAVE SOM PARTICULAR PROPOSITIONS THAT THEY WANT TO DISCUSS WITH THE SINGAPORIAN GOVERNMENT TO DISCUSS IT WITH THE SINGAPORIAN GOVERNMENT.

Q. GOING BACK TO THE DOCKYARD FACILITIES, WOULD NEW ZEALAND WANT ANY SPECIAL REQUIREMENT THERE THAT IT DOESN'T HAVE AT THE MOMENT?

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PRIME MINISTER: NO. I CAN'T SEE ANY PARTICULAR REQUIREMENT FOR BERTHAGE THAT NEW ZEALAND WOULD NEED THAT COULDN'T BE OFFERED TO US AND WOULDN'T BE OFFERED TO US BY THE SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT. END QUOTE

3. AMBASSADOR HAS DISCUSSED PRESS CONFERENCE WITH SECDEF JOHN ROBERTSON WHO SAID ROWLING'S COMMENTS REFERRED ONLY TO USN GENERAL REQUIREMENTS IN SINGAPORE AS OPPOSED TO

SPECIFIC PROBLEM OF MANAGEMENT OF BERTHS AND FUEL DEPOT.
HE FURTHER STATED DECISION ON GNZ MANAGEMENT WILL NOT BE
MADE UNTIL AFTER MINDEF FRASER VISIT TO SINGAPORE LATER
THIS MONTH.

4. COMMENT - CLOSE READING OF ROWLING'S STATEMENTS SHOWS
THEY ARE SUBJECT TO MORE THAN ONE INTERPRETATION. PRIME
MINISTER IS OBVIOUSLY KEEPING HIS OPTIONS OPEN WHILE
APPEARING TO SATISFY THE DEMANDS OF THE LEFT WING OF
THE LABOUR PARTY. WHILE WE BELIEVE THE FINAL DECISION
WILL DEPEND TO SOME EXTENT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE
BY FRASER AND ROBERTSON ON THEIR RETURN, WE ALSO BELIEVE
DECISION WILL BE INFLUENCED BY DEGREE OF SUPPORT ROWLING
RECEIVES IN MAY 12-16 LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE.
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